

Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research

**Plenary Session
Warsaw June 30, 2005**

Report

Delegation present

Members

Argentina, Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States

Liaison

Croatia, Estonia, Greece, Slovakia

Observers

Belgium, Spain, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe–Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE–ODIHR), Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany

I. Recent members—Statements by the delegates of Romania and Switzerland

Romania

The **Romanian delegate** presented the initiatives launched by her government since Romania's accession to Task Force membership in December 2004. A progress report was also circulated to the Task Force delegates.

Particular emphasis was put on the cooperation implemented with France, Israel, and the United States especially regarding teacher training. The objectives of the new compulsory history curriculum were also presented. Other issues dealt with the follow up on the work of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, the intention of the Romanian government to host a conference on anti-Semitism in 2006 and also the project to create a National Institute of Holocaust Studies.

The **Italian delegate** expressed his compliments for the progress made in Romania and called for an intensification of international cooperation with Romania, as had been the case under the Italian presidency of the Task Force.

Israel confirmed its intentions to intensify efforts and commitments in Romania in order to follow up on the goodwill expressed by the Romanian government to reinforce its action in Holocaust education.

The **United States** also confirmed the importance of continuing efforts already implemented and assured the Romanian delegation of its full support in that matter.

Switzerland

The **Swiss delegate** presented an innovative institutional approach initiated in view of Switzerland's accession to Task Force membership in 2004. The Swiss delegation to the Task Force has gathered a national support group involving federal and cantonal bodies, NGOs, and individuals committed to Holocaust education in Switzerland. This group meets twice a year and is working to centralize information on what is being done in the country. It informs the Swiss delegation about new issues regarding Holocaust teaching and allows the sharing at the national level of experiences and problems. This also helps the civil society to be better informed and therefore more involved in international initiatives. Furthermore, this group offers support for the activities implemented within the Task Force and contributes to a better reactivity of the Swiss delegation. This type of initiative could eventually serve as an example for other countries.

The **Swiss delegate** also announced Switzerland's intention to cooperate further with the Centre of Contemporary Jewish Documentation in Milan, particularly regarding activities within the Swiss Italian-speaking community.

Italy underlined the pertinence of the Swiss model and the active participation of the Swiss delegation in the Task Force.

The **Academic Advisor** noted the importance of such innovative and positive approaches and mentioned that it could also be an excellent model for other countries, particularly those with a federal or a decentralized system. He also congratulated the head of the Swiss delegation for his constant and constructive involvement in Task Force business.

II. Next Chairmanship—Hungary

The **Hungarian representative** presented in detail the goals of the 2006 incoming Hungarian Chairmanship of the Task Force. He explained that the office of the Chair will be located at the Ministry of Education and confirmed the commitment to the Hungarian chairmanship of the Department of Human Rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He also presented his intention to increase the level of participation in the Task Force of countries of the Balkans, to better promote the Task Force and reinforce cooperation with the OSCE and the Council of Europe.

Furthermore, the **Hungarian delegate** stressed the opportunity for Hungary to better develop relationships between the government and civil society and also the necessity of raising awareness at the national level of the Hungarian participation in the extermination of the Jews.

The **Czech representative** reminded the Plenary about his delegation's initial intentions to take over the Task Force Presidency in 2006 and gave explanations about its decision to withdraw. He particularly emphasized the lack of communication between the candidate countries and the necessity to avoid any sort of competition between Task Force members to obtain the chairmanship.

In order to improve the current system, the Czech Republic suggested the following procedures to be implemented by candidates for chairing the Task Force:

1. The discussion about candidacies for chairmanship should take place in the period preceding the second plenary meeting two years before the chairmanship in question.
2. The discussion about candidacies should be closed, and the candidate country should announce its intention to become chair during the second plenary meeting two years before the chairmanship in question.
3. The candidate should confirm its commitment and present details about its chairmanship during the first plenary meeting in the year before the chairmanship in question. In case of any difficulty, the Chair will find an alternate candidate and launch a discussion on the listserv to keep the national delegations informed.

The **German delegate** expressed his opposition to the proposal. He noted that the Task Force's strength partly lies in its flexibility and informal workings, saying that therefore, in general, it is not recommended to add more rules than necessary. On the particular issue of the chairmanship, the plenary could just recommend that the Chair circulate information better in the future and systematically organize discussions on candidacies with member countries.

The Plenary agreed that the Czech proposal should not be formally considered as a new rule but would be the basis for a common understanding on how candidates should proceed in the future.

III. Academic Advisor

The **Academic Advisor Subcommittee** (Chair, Italy, USA, Sweden, AWG Chair, and Academic Advisor) presented its candidate, Prof. Dina Porat, to the Plenary and also circulated a document describing the duties and responsibilities of the Academic Advisor as a basis for discussion.

Prof. Yehuda Bauer reaffirmed his attachment to the current system of having only one advisor for the Task Force and stressed the crucial role of the advisor not only in supporting the Chair and the working groups but also as a facilitator in discussions between the national delegations. He emphasized the original diplomatic role of the Advisor and his or her importance to help maintaining consensus within the organization.

The **German delegate** raised concerns about the procedure implemented to choose the new Advisor. He referred to a proposal circulated informally by the United Kingdom suggesting that the Advisor be replaced by a group of experts and noted that this proposal had never been discussed in Plenary Session or through the listservs.

He stated that Germany was not ready to decide on names but would rather start a discussion on the basis of the original UK proposal.

Prof. Yehuda Bauer expressed his disagreement to an alternative solution that would replace the Academic Advisor by a committee of experts, which could not be as efficient as an independent individual in helping the reaching of consensus.

The **United States** delegate argued that the whole process for choosing the Academic Advisor's successor has always been open to suggestions from delegations not directly involved in the discussions of the subcommittee and reaffirmed the support of his country to Prof. Dina Porat's candidacy. He also reiterated the importance of the Academic Advisor as a moral conscience of the Task Force and a warrant of the respect of the Stockholm Declaration.

France also expressed support for the current system and for the choice of Dina Porat and urged the Chair to help delegations reach a consensus on that matter as soon as possible.

The **United Kingdom** also expressed support for the subcommittee's choice and mentioned that the suggestion put on the table by Germany was no longer a UK proposal. The UK delegate raised the importance of having a job description to make the duties and responsibilities of the advisor explicit for all delegations.

The **Israeli delegate** expressed his appreciation for the work done by Prof. Yehuda Bauer and its opposition to the creation of a committee to replace the Academic Advisor, feeling it would introduce rigidity in the whole system.

It was decided that

1. A job description as presented by the Academic Advisor but amended by Italy would be circulated over the listserv for approval by the national delegations. (Cf. Annex 1)

2. Dina Porat will be the next Academic Advisor. Her assignment will be three years. The Strategic and Implementation Working Group will give an evaluation after the first year of her term.

3. The Task Force will invite Prof. Dina Porat to attend the second plenary session under Polish Chairmanship in Krakow. Her trip and accommodation expenses will be reimbursed from the Task Force Fund.

4. In the future, journey and accommodation expenses approved by the Academic Advisor will systematically be reimbursed by the Task Force Chair, following local regulations.

IV. Announcements of candidacies for membership

Belgium announced that a formal agreement has been reached between the Belgian linguistic communities that finally allows the federal government to officially present the candidacy in November 2005 at the second plenary meeting under Polish chairmanship. The United States and French representatives mentioned their trips to Brussels and expressed their support to the Belgian candidacy.

Croatia, a liaison country since 2002, said it would officially submit its candidacy for full membership in November 2005. The United States, Israel, and Italy supported its candidacy and expressed the hope of beginning or continuing cooperation with the Croatian government within the framework of the Task Force.

Slovakia also confirmed its readiness to become member of the Task Force in November 2005. The candidacy was supported by the Czech Republic, Germany, and Hungary.

Greece announced a possible candidacy in November 2005, as well. The Greek representative cited the commitment of the Greek government in issues related to Holocaust education, remembrance, and research. France, involved in the liaison with Greece, declared that it would support the candidacy.

The Plenary agreed that all Baseline Studies for Task Force Membership would be submitted to the national delegations by e-mail before the end of September.

V. Strategic and Implementation Working Group report

V.a. Situation of the International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen

The **Chair** reported on the latest progress made concerning the opening of the Bad Arolsen archives to scholars and other researchers and reported sending a letter to the Italian president of the International Commission of the International Tracing Service (ITS-IC) in view of the ITS-IC 30 May Rome meeting.

Particular emphasis was put on the role played by the Task Force and particularly the delegations of France and the United States, to support the opening of those archives.

The **French delegate** reported on the decision reached in Rome 30 May 2005 by the ITS-IC to create a subcommittee—composed of archivists, lawyers, and diplomats representing France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the United States—in charge of drafting a proposal aimed at achieving the opening of the archives before the end of the year. The committee was to meet on 1 July 2005 in Paris under the auspices of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Task Force delegations decided to remain apprised of this matter and recommended that the Chair and also the Dutch delegation, in charge of presiding over the ISAIAH Task Force subcommittee on Bad Arolsen, continue closely following up on the activities of the ITS-IC.

The **French delegation** invited the members of ISAIAH to attend the meetings of the ITS-IC Subcommittee.

The **United States delegate** also called on the members of the Task Force to do everything possible to support the ongoing process within the ITS-IC.

The **Chair of the Academic Working Group** and the **Academic Advisor** stressed the importance of not only making available archives directly related to the Holocaust, but all those connected to the event, such as the documents from the postwar period, and also those dealing with forced labor, displaced persons camps, etc., which are highly relevant for Holocaust research.

Finally, a press release has been issued on behalf of the Task Force acknowledging the positive steps taken and encouraging countries involved to reach an agreement before the end of the year.

V.b. Involvement of the Task Force in other genocide issues

The **United Kingdom delegation** presented a proposal on how to use the resources and expertise developed by the Task Force to contribute to offering better information on genocide and giving related policy making advice. A working paper was circulated to this effect.

The **British delegate** insisted that the suggestions made to facilitate the involvement of the Task Force in other genocide issues did not imply in any way a change of orientation or a modification of the initial mandate of the Task Force, which is first and foremost a focus on the Holocaust. He stressed the importance of strictly following the 2000 Stockholm Declaration, which defines the Task Force's guidelines, but also emphasised the necessity and moral duty to reflect on current situations of genocide. He placed particular stress on the current situation of genocide in Darfur, Sudan, about which the Task Force should be in position of at least publicly expressing concerns.

Denmark, Germany, Norway, and Sweden welcomed these views stated by the United Kingdom.

The **Academic Advisor** pointed out that such an approach is crucial for the work of the Task Force and that an important aspect of educating about the genocide of the Jews, the most extreme and unprecedented case of genocide, was also to discuss the context of the genocide including what happened before and after World War II, with the Holocaust being a central point of focus. The Task Force is intended to deal with the lessons to be drawn from the Holocaust and therefore must reflect on current issues on the basis of the knowledge gained from the Holocaust. Thus, it only makes sense that an international body involved with this issue does not remain silent while genocide and large-scale massacres are being perpetrated.

The **Academic Advisor** suggested that, as a first step, the Chair of the Task Force draft a declaration about Darfur to be discussed by the national delegations.

The **Israeli delegate** stressed the importance of staying clearly focused on the Holocaust and opposed the suggestion by the United Kingdom of compiling a paper describing the role that the

Task Force could play with regard to other genocide issues. However, he did agree on the importance of raising issues related to other genocides on the agenda of the Plenary and asked the Chair of the Task Force to submit a declaration on Darfur to the national delegations.

The **French delegate** underlined the fact that educational activities on the Holocaust must necessarily be examined in relation to other genocides. However, he also stressed the specificity of anti-Semitism with regard to other forms of racism and also the specificity of the Holocaust with regard to other genocides. He explained that these were the basic elements of the French approach on that matter and reaffirmed that political debate among Task Force members should focus on the Holocaust and that the Education Working Group should deal with the relation between the Holocaust and other genocides as a pedagogical matter.

The Plenary decided that the Polish Chair of the Task Force would draft a declaration on the situation of genocide in Sudan to be discussed further by the national delegates and that the Academic, Education, and Memorials Working Groups put on the agenda of their next meetings the issue of teaching about the Holocaust and its connections with teaching and remembering other genocides.

VI. Education Working Group (EWG) report

The complete report of the EWG will be circulated over the general listserv.

The following issues were brought to the Plenary:

a. National reports on Holocaust education in Task Force member countries

The EWG has revised almost all the reports delivered by the national delegations and has asked the liaison and candidate countries to also make reports.

The Plenary decided that all the reports will be reviewed and finalized by the member countries in view of publication on the Task Force Web site before the next meeting in Krakow in November. Reports will then regularly be updated by the delegations.

The excellent cooperation with the OSCE in that matter was mentioned. The EWG also recommended that relationships are initiated with other international organizations involved in Holocaust education.

b. Evaluation of projects supported by the Task Force

Mrs. Karen Polak (Netherlands), Chair of the EWG, stressed the necessity to standardize the evaluation of educational projects such as teacher training seminars. A subcommittee was appointed within the EWG to create better evaluation procedures.

c. EWG archives

Considering the important amount of work performed, the EWG decided to create a repository of archives on the Internet, which would be directly accessible by the members of the group. Discussions on practicalities are being held with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). The archives would contain project proposal applications, EWG recommendations, evaluations of projects supported, etc.

d. Guidelines on projects

The EWG has compiled a new Project Proposal Application (PPA) that will be submitted to the chairs of the Academic and Memorials Working Groups for final approval. Recommendations to be given in appendix of the PPA to applicants for educational projects have been also compiled.

The **Academic Advisor** asked that the EWG mentions in the appendix its preferences for “bilateral and multilateral projects” and not only for “multilateral projects”. This will also be phrased this way in the *Guidelines on Types of Projects Eligible for Financial Support*.

e. EWG guidelines

The **EWG Chair** asked the national delegations to make sure that all documents compiled by the working group were translated in all Task Force languages (*How To Teach about the Holocaust; Why Teach about the Holocaust; What To Teach about the Holocaust; Guidelines on Study Trips to Holocaust-Related Authentic and Non-Authentic Sites*).

The **EWG Chair** also insisted that all publications of these documents, notably by ministries of education, clearly mention that the Task Force or the Education Working Group of the Task Force is the author of the documents.

VI. Resistance to Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust Subcommittee

Mr. Christer Mattsson (Sweden), Chair of the Subcommittee Resistance to Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust, presented the first outlines of a survey for teachers to be performed eventually in all Task Force countries on the challenges and obstacles faced when teaching about the Holocaust.

The Plenary agreed that the subcommittee should organise the survey in pilot countries in coordination with appropriate the national delegations. The countries chosen are the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, and the United States (to be confirmed).

The Plenary also accepted the idea of publishing the reports of all the conferences that have been held on that topic (Amsterdam, Montecatini, and soon Paris) in a single volume.

VII. Task Force Fund Working Group

A detailed report of the meeting will be circulated over the general listserv.

The Working Group pointed out the possibility for the Task Force to finance many more projects than it is currently the case and emphasized the responsibility of the national delegations in promoting the Task Force in their own countries and abroad in addition to the work already done by the Chair.

The working group requested that the national delegations present a short overview of the initiatives taken to publicize the Task Force at the next Plenary Session.

The **Swedish delegation**, in charge of the Fund, also mentioned the case of Argentina that has still not paid its fees to the Task Force Fund for 2005 and recalled the proposal by the Strategic and Implementation Working Group to suspend Argentina from the Task Force. The **Argentinean delegate** confirmed that the transfer of monies has been ordered by the government.

The **Swedish delegation** also suggested that the administration of the Task Force Fund be made in euros. Most of member countries' budgets are indeed already or will soon be in euros. The Working Group therefore suggested that in 2006, Task Force countries pay in euros the equivalent of U.S. \$25,000 and that they pay 25,000 euros in 2007.

However, considering the fact that switching to euros might eventually constitute a noticeable increase in the membership fee, the national delegations were not able to reach any decision at this point. Internal consultations will take place before this issue is put on the agenda of the November Krakow Plenary Session.

VIII. Academic Working Group

A detailed report of the meeting will be circulated over the general listserv

Chair of the AWG Mrs. Juliane Wetzel presented some elements of the discussions that took place at the Working Group's meeting.

The first issue was the place of the AWG within the Task Force. The group is still facing important difficulties in organising itself and in reviewing project proposal applications. This is partly due to the fact that many members appointed by the Task Force countries are either not Holocaust scholars or have simply been absent from the group's activities. Moreover, it was decided to clarify the internal procedures and try to define the work of the AWG better.

Concerning the United Kingdom's proposal to involve the Task Force in other genocide issues, the AWG recommended that the Plenary stay focused on the Holocaust and therefore to not extend the mandate of the Task Force, although it is inevitable to need to deal with other genocides when teaching about the Holocaust.

The AWG chair also reported on objections raised within the group regarding the procedure to be followed for the nomination of the new Academic Advisor of the Task Force.

Finally, the AWG suggested that a bibliography for teachers be compiled that would eventually be available on the Task Force Web site. Also, the AWG Chair mentioned the idea of encouraging academic workshops for educators to provide them with updates on the latest research in the field of Holocaust studies.

IX. Information Working Group

A detailed report of the meeting will be circulated over the general listserv.

Chair of the IWG Ms. Michelle Gross (United States) presented the concept of the new Task Force Web site currently being prepared by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The Web site is expected to be ready by September 2005.

The **United Kingdom delegate**, mentioning that the attendance at the IWG meeting was very low, called on the member countries to assign representatives to the Information Working Group.

X. Memorials Working Group

A detailed report of the meeting will be circulated over the general listserv.

Ms. Heidemarie Uhl (Austria), Chair of the Working Group, presented to the Plenary some issues raised by the MWG.

Firstly, the MWG created a subcommittee in charge of developing the group's terms of reference and for compiling new guidelines. The aim is to further extend the activities of the group and to eventually reinforce the scope of its expertise. An additional day for the meeting was requested from the Chair in order to enable the group to work more extensively on these issues on the occasion of the next Plenary Sessions of the Task Force in Krakow.

Furthermore, considering the important delays in reviewing the project applications submitted to the group, the MWG decided to clarify its procedures and to rationalise the reviewing process in order to improve its efficiency.

Ms. Uhl also presented the results of the MWG/Topography of Terror project of a memorials database supported by the Task Force. The project is entering its final phase. An agreement should be made as soon as possible with the IWG in order to find out how to incorporate it into the database to the Task Force Web site. Furthermore, additional funding will be necessary to finalize the project. The **Chair of the MWG** will write to the European Union in order to support Topography of Terror's application for funds.

Ms. Uhl mentioned discussions held about the new exhibitions at the Auschwitz Museum and the important transformations currently made on the site. The MWG also encouraged all international initiatives that would benefit former extermination sites memorials, in particular Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka.

In conjunction with the work of the MWG, the head of the **Austrian delegation** presented the latest developments concerning the organization of an international conference on Holocaust commemoration to be held in Vienna during the spring 2006 under the auspices of the Task Force. The conference will deal with cultures of remembrance in Eastern and Central Europe, focusing particularly on conflicts between commemoration of victims of the Holocaust and those of communist regimes. The conference, mainly financed by the **Austrian Ministry of Education** and the **Austrian National Fund**, is being organised in cooperation with the **Polish and German Task Force delegations**.

XI. Any other business

The **Austrian delegation** requested that more time be dedicated to the reports of the working groups during the Plenary Session. The **Polish Chair** therefore decided to organize in Krakow a two-day Plenary Session and also to give to interested working groups the possibility of meeting one additional day in the facilities of the Auschwitz State Museum.

Annex 1. Academic Advisor—Tasks and Responsibilities

(Circulated over the General Listserv 7 July 2005)

The position of AA has evolved together with the International Task Force (ITF), and hard and fast definitions of his or her duties should be avoided as far as possible.

On the other hand the need has emerged to lay down, in very general terms, what the AA's tasks and responsibilities are:

1. The AA's responsibility is to uphold the Stockholm Declaration and to help prevent any deviation from that fundamental charter of the ITF.
2. The AA, the prime aide to the Chair, supports and advises the Chair of the ITF to the best of his or her ability in all matters in which the ITF engages, primarily, but not exclusively in those that pertain to the overall work being done by the Working and Liaison Groups.
3. As the consensus rule applies to the work of ITF, the AA should seek ways to help the Task Force Chair as well as the Chairs of the Working and Liaison Groups in finding productive compromises between different views, in the spirit of the aims pursued by the Task Force.
4. The AA participates at all meetings of the Plenary and Strategic and Implementation Working Group (SIWG) of the ITF.
5. The AA will be available for consultation, first and foremost whenever the Chair asks him or her to do so, and secondly also by any national delegates, by members of the different Working and Liaison Groups, and by facilitators of projects approved by the ITF.
6. The AA is expected to review all funding applications (Project Proposal Applications or PPAs). He or she has no need to comment on them but may intervene with questions, approvals or oppositions. He or she has no formal veto rights regarding the applications, but his or her views and suggestions are to be taken in serious consideration in the process to come to a judgement on these applications. It has proved useful that, when the AA has opposed an application, it be reconsidered, preferably with the AA as one of the reviewers. The same fluid procedure applies to any idea or policy suggestion that may arise with the ITF.
7. The election of the AA requires a consensus of the member country's diplomatic representatives who may also indicate an expiration date for his or her service. Should her or she resign before completion of the term, he or she should notify this far in advance so that the Plenary can take the appropriate actions.
8. The AA acts *pro bono*, and therefore receives no remuneration whatsoever. Only his or her travel, hotel and actual expenses are covered, normally by the country that currently holds the chairmanship.

Annex 2 . International Tracing Service—press release, 30 June 2005

International Holocaust Task Force Urges Opening of Bad Arolsen Archive

Meeting in Warsaw 30 June, the 20-country Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research reiterated its call for immediate steps to be taken to open the archive of the International Tracing Service (ITS) at Bad Arolsen, Germany to scholars and other researchers. In this regard, the Task Force welcomed the decision 30 May in Rome of the International Commission of the International Tracing Service to entrust an intergovernmental committee of experts to assess the conditions under which the 30–40 million Holocaust-era documents at Bad Arolsen can be made available for research, including on the basis of a proposal to copy or digitize them. Considering the time elapsed since the archive was assembled in Germany after World War II and the historical importance of the documents deposited at Bad Arolsen for a fuller understanding of the Holocaust, the Task Force urges the member countries of the International Commission to address this matter on an urgent basis.